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ABSTRACT

The study assesses impacts of population growth and migration status on academic performance and participation of 1,743 white high school seniors from primarily nonmetropolitan areas of Utah. Data from a survey of the state's 1980 graduating seniors are employed in the analysis. Indicators of academic performance are the number of organizations in which respondents participated and self-reported grade point average (GPA). Migration status, sex, religious preference, and socioeconomic background are included in multivariate analyses of the relationships. Comparisons between migrants and natives in rapidly and nonrapidly growing communities indicate lower rates of participation and lower GPAs for newcomers in rapid growth communities only. High school seniors in rapidly growing areas were less likely to participate in extra curricular organizations but did not report lower GPAs than students in moderate or slowly growing areas. The religious preference of students (Mormon vs. non-Mormon) rather than community growth or migration status shows significant positive impacts on participation of high school students in nonmetropolitan areas of Utah. Findings of this study have some implications for emphasizing that the well-established and shared belief system of Mormons and the life style oriented around it provide strong power to conform to the gemeinschaft quality of life in nonmetropolitan communities of Utah. (NEC)

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School Performances of Migrant and Native Youth in Nonmetropolitan Areas of Utah

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in Nonmetropolitan Areas of Utah

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to assess the impacts of population growth and migration status on academic performance and participation of high school seniors in nonmetropolitan areas of Utah. Data from a survey of the state's 1980 graduating seniors are employed in the analysis. Indicators of academic performance are (1) the number of organizations in which respondents participated and (2) self-reported grade point average. Comparisons between migrants and natives in rapidly and nonrapidly growing communities indicate lower rates of participation and lower GPAs for newcomers in rapid growth communities only. High school seniors in rapidly growing areas were less likely to participate in extra curricular organizations but did not report lower GPAs than students in moderate or slowly growing areas. The religious preference of students, Mormon vs. nonMormon, rather than community growth or migration status shows significant impacts on participation of high school students in nonmetropolitan areas of Utah.

Performance of Migrant and Native Youth in Nonmetropolitan Areas of Utah

INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in research on the impacts of rapid population growth in rural areas suggest earlier assumptions of either full scale pathologies or widespread benefits are false. Instead, rapid population growth appears to entail both of these or neither of these, and to impact segments of communities differently (for the critical review of earlier studies, see Wilkinson et al., 1982). The need for empirical analysis of specific problems or benefits has been a common conclusion of recent authors (see Krannich and Greider, 1984; Gold 1985). In line with this development this study assesses the relationship between population growth and the performances of high school seniors in nonmetropolitan counties of Utah. Migration status, sex, religion and socioeconomic background are included in multivariate analysis of the relationship.

There are two bodies of literature, the boomtown studies and nonmetropolitan population turnaround studies, with focus on problems and benefits which might be associated with significant population growth in rural areas. However, these bodies of literature have not been adequately integrated. The nonmetropolitan turnaround of the 1970s generated a significant amount of research on social and economic changes which might accompany the reversal of longterm population declines in rural areas. It was persued to a large extend from a demographic

perspectives. In the western states concerns were further heightened by the emergence of large-scale energy facilities in a number of remote areas. These studies were primarly guided by environmental sociological perspectives. In some of these counties population doubled within three years after decades of little or no population growth. For the nation as a whole the turnaround meant rural areas shifted from an annual population decline of -0.9 percent during the 1960s to an increase of 11.1 percent during the 1970s. Given the concerns expressed over the consequences of this, the heightened concerns in the west where overall growth during the 1970s was double the national average are understandable. In the mountain states, the most rapidly growing region and in which boomtowns are most common, growth during the 1970s was triple the national average, 37.2 percent to 11.1 percent respectively.

Rapid population growth in the western communities, largely due to energy developments during the 1970s, has led to the increasing attention to the impacts of rapid population growth by social scientists. However, with some limited exceptions (e.g., Osborne et al., 1984; Freudenburg, 1984), prior research has not focused on the effects of rapid growth on youth. The present paper examines the impacts of growth on newcomer and longterm residents among youth in rapid, moderate and slow growth communities.

NONMETROPOLITAN TURNAROUND AND BOOMTOWNS

Population growth in areas of previous longterm net

outmigration is the key link between the boomtown and the nonmetropolitan turnaround research. In the largely demographic based studies of the turnaround more emphasis, with some notable exceptions, was given to documenting the extent of population change and its determinants than to its consequences (Frisbie and Poston, 1978; Williams and Sofranko, 1979; Kasarda, 1980; Wardwell, 1980; Wardwell and Gilchrist, 1980). In contrast, boomtown studies have focused on the consequences of growth (Little, 1977; Cortese and Jones, 1977; Murdock et al., 1980; Cortese, 1982; Leistritz et al., 1982; Murdock et al., 1982; Murray and Weber, 1982; Gold, 1985). In a rare depicting of nonmetropolitan areas with energy induced growth in the context of the nonmetropolitan turnaround, Murdock (1980) suggests little differences in impacts between these and nonmetropolitan areas growing for other reasons. His conclusion was based on data showing that inmigrants to energy impacted communities were similar to inmigrants in other areas with respect to sociodemographic characteristics and that recent inmigrants and longterm residents share common concerns about the quality of public services. Perhaps most importantly, Murdock (1980) notes that research conducted on energy-related growth could be applied to help understand general questions about the implications of the nonmetropolitan turnaround.

Although there has been little cross referring across these bodies, a common conclusion has been that the impacts of growth are not likely to be, contrary to earlier social disruption hypothesis, either widespread pathologies or full scale benefits

(see Wilkinson et al., 1982). In the earlist boomtown studies conclusions were limited because of a sole focus on boomtowns. The addition of control communities in later studies was a major advance in permitting researchers to more carefully assess whether or not the findings were the products of rapid growth (Freudenburg, 1982, 1984; Krannich and Greider, 1984; Wilkinson et al., 1984; Krannich et al., 1985). The measurement of the impacts in multidimensional aspects leads to conclude that rapid growth appears to entail both pathologies and benefits and to impact segments of communities differently (Krannich and Greider, 1984; Gold, 1985). The emphasis given to these findings points to the need for analyses of specific problems or benefits of growth.

YOUTHS IN RAPID GROWTH COMMUNITY

The early research on socioeconomic impacts of rapid population growth had methodological and conceptual difficulties (Freudenburg, 1982, 1984; Albercht, 1982; Finaterbusch, 1982; Wilkinson et al., 1982). The particularly serious problems in earlier studies, Freudenburg (1984) insists, are 'lack of controls, limited avaliability of individual-level data, and a resultant inability to examine the impacts of rapid growth on specific segments of the population' (p. 698). Much of the earlier studies on impacts of rapid population growth has focused on structural economic variables and resulting public services and community facilities. Relatively more recent attention has been given to the human consequences of boomtowns, especially to the effects on social well-being of residents in rapidly growing

rural communities.

Rapid population growth in the nonmetropolitan areas, especially in the rural areas of the west, is usually determined by the direct employment requirements of the facilities associated with energy development projects, and employment required to provide services to them (Murdock et al., 1980; Murdock et al., 1982). With rapid population growth, changes in local economic structures (Leistritz et al., 1982) and impacts on community organizations and services (Cortese, 1982; Murray and Weber, 1982) are the topics that have appeared in the existing research on rapid population growth. Some research has focused on the individual consequences of rapid growth, such as social well-being of local residents (Little, 1977; Cortese and Jones, 1977; Freudenburg, 1980, 1982, 1984; Krannich and Greider, 1984; Krannich et al., 1985), and pathodological social disorganization (Cortese, 1982; Wilkinson et al., 1984; Gold, 1985). Relatively recent research has contrasted various segments of population within boomtowns and compared them with corresponding residents in stable communities (Fredenburg, 1982, 1984; Krannich and Greider, 1984; Osborne et al., 1984; Krannich et al., 1985).

Freudenburg's (1982, 1984) research indicates rapid growth is especially alienating to youth and that they are generally more vulnerable than are their elders. For instance, the responses of young people in boomtowns

> apparently have relatively little to do with economics, and a good deal more to do with sociocultural factors. ... Psychologically, the young people are affected because they

> are not yet as set in their ways ..., or rather, because they do not have a well-developed sense of self. ... Socially, the students ... come into contact with newcomers every day they attend the class. (Freudenburg, 1982: 164)

In the study of public school students in rural areas of Utah, Osborne et al. (1984) conclude that "elementary and secondary students differentially identify personal problems based on their sex and the growth of their communities" (p. 564). For example, secondary female students in rapidly growing communities reported more problems than corresponding female students in relatively stable communities, and female students underline more problems than male students both in the rapidly growing and the slowly growing communities.

Osborne et al. (1984) have not considered length of residence in the community and religious affiliation of the students in contrasting different sexes within rapidly growing rural communities and comparing those with the students in slowly growing communities. The objective differences between newcomers and oldtimers in the rapidly growing communities are likely to be small. This does not mean that perceived differences will be small as well (Freudenburg, 1982).

> One difference between newcomers and oldtimers is that the neewcomers may be less likely to feel that the host community is truely "special," because they are not parties to the experiences and relationships which make the community special to its longtime residents. Another difference is that the newcomers may indeed be more disappointed than the longtime residents by the host community's lack of what are sometimes called "urban amenities." (Pp. 147-48)

However, the empirical study by Freudenburg (1984) shows that the

newcomer youths in the boomtown have a lower level of alienation than the newcomers in the corresponding communities.

The specific problem with which this study is concerned is the relationship between population growth and the performance of high school seniors in nonmetropolitan counties of Utah. The particular aspects of performance on which this study is focused are (1) participation in activities and (2) grade point average. Migration status, sex, religious preference and socioeconomic background are included in multivariate analyses of the relationships. Because of the numerical dominance of Mormon population in Utah and sociocultural differences between Mormons and the larger society, it is important that religion be considered in studies of Utah residents.

DATA AND PROCEDURES

The data for this study come from a 1980 survey of 3304 students in graduating class from 44 high schools in Utah. Of 44 selected high schools, five schools located in metropolitan areas (Utah, Salt Lake, and Weber County), and the rest of 39 schools were located in nonmetropolitan areas. In this study, analysis is limited to the 1743 white high school students.

To examine the impacts of rapid growth of the community and sociodemographic attributes of the student on the way of school life of the youths, two variables are utilized as dependent variables: number of school, church and community activities and organization they participate in frequently or fairly often, and their grade point average, as reported by the students

themselves. Ten activities and organizations were listed in the questionnaire, which include sports teams, music groups, dramatic productions, FFA, FHA, honor societies, student government, church-connected groups, girls/boys league, and girl/boy scouts. Thus the possible number of activities and organization a student participates in ranges from 0 to 10. The self-reported GPA ranges from 0.0 to 4.0.

A county-based population change between 1975-1980 is employed as the indicator of level of community growth. Most communities can probably absorb an annual population growth rate of 5 percent (Little, 1977). The average annual population growth of the mountain states is 2.9 pecent. Each student is assigned a code indicating whether their school is located: (1) in rapid growth community if the increase of population between 1975 and 1980 is equal to or greater than 27.6 percent; (2) in moderate growth community if the population increase is less than 27.6 percent but is equal to or greater than 15.4 percent; and (3) in slow growth community if the population increase during the five years is less than 15.4 percent. Other variables in this study include the student's migration status, sex, religious affiliation and socioeconomic background. Length of residence is used to develop migration status of the students. Newcomers are the students who had lived less than 5 years in their community, and oldtimers are those living equal to or more than 5 years in their community. Religious affiliation is dichotomized into Mormon and nonMormon. Family background variables include

father's occupational status as measured with Duncan index, father's educational attainment measured in number of years of formal schooling, and mother's educational attainment in number of years of formal schooling achieved by the student's mother.

The statistical analysis comprises two stages. In first stage it is examined whether or not the level of community growth impacts high school students and rapid growth impacts differently subsets of students within the communities by the respective individual characteristics. In the second stage, the students in rapid growth communities are compared with those in moderate and slow growth communities, and different subsets of the students within the communities are contrasted with respect to the impacts of community growth.

FINDINGS

Table 1 presents sociodemographic sample characteristics of different communities. The point of worth to note is that higher proportion of high school students in rapid growth communities are newcomers who have lived less than 5 years in their communities than those in moderate and slow growth communities. This implies that the rapid population growth in nonmetropolitan communities of Utah is mainly due to inmigrants. Surprisingly, the proportion of nonMormon high school students in rapid growth communities is lower than that in slow growth or stable communities, albeit by a nonsignificant margin.

It is one of the primary objectives of this study to examine whether or not rapid growth has effects on the high school

students. The lowest rows of Table 2 and Table 3 refer to as the impacts of rapid growth on grade point average and participation of high school students respectively. There appears no statistically significant difference in self-reported GPA between students in different communities. The mean numbers of activities and organizations participating in show significant difference between the students in different communities. The students in rapid growth communities participate at the lowest degree in activities and organizations, and those in slow growth counties participate at the highest degree.

When comparisons are made between the students having different sociodemographic characteristics, the findings are different from the previous results. Sex affects high school students' academic performance in all of the three different community types and in overall: female students reported higher grade point average. Migration status does not affect academic performance of the youths overall, but newcomer students in rapid growth communities reported significantly lower level of grade point average than oldtimer students in the same community type. While Mormon students reported higher grade point average than nonMormon students in general, the difference is significant only among the students in moderate growth communities.

On the number of school-, church- and community-related activities and organizations the students participate in, Mormon students show significantly higher scores than nonMormon students in all community types. Oldtimer students participate in more

activities and organizations than newcomers, but the statistical significance appears only among the students in rapid growth communities. Female students show significantly higher participation among the students in slow growth communities only.

When adjustments are made for socioeconomic background (father's occupation, father's education and mother's education), the results do not differ at all from the earlier findings.

DISCUSSIONS

The particular interests of this study are on the impacts of rapid population growth and demographic characteristics on the academic performance and activity participation of high school seniors in nonmetropolitan counties of Utah. The present study finds no evidence that rapid population growth would affect the academic performance of high school students. Instead, the findings conclude migration status has effects on academic performance of the students in rapid growth communities.

The findings of this study are partially supportive of the social disruption hypothesis which suggests that rapid population growth would impact negatively the residents in nonmetropolitan communities. The students in rapid growth communities have the lowest participation in activities and organizations. Migration status is significantly related with participation only among the students in rapid growth communities. Interestingly, religion - Mormon versus nonMormon, has significant relationship with participation of high school students in nonmetropolitan communities of Utah.

The findings of this study have some implications for emphasizing that well-established and shared belief system of Mormons and life style oriented around it provide strong power to stay in Gemeinschaft quality of life in nonmetropolitan communities of Utah. The religious preference of the students, Mormon versus nonMormon, rather than the rapid growth community affects the participation in activities and organizations of high school students.

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Table 1. Selected Sociodemographic Sample Characteristics

Variables	Slow Growth Community	Moderate Growth Community	Rapid Growth Community	Total
(N)	652	657	434	1743
Residence Types				
	%	%	%	%
Newcomers	18.3	19.2	30.4	21.6
Oldtimers	81.7	80.8	69.6	78.4
	X^2=26.479**			
Sex				
	%	%	%	%
Male	53.5	48.6	45.9	49.7
Female	46.5	51.4	54.1	50.3
	X^2=6.735*			
Religion				
	%	%	%	%
Mormon	85.9	88.9	86.9	87.3
NonMormon	14.1	11.1	13.1	12.7
	X^2=2.731			
Father's Occupation				
Mean	39.4	43.9	37.8	40.6
S.D.	24.4	26.2	23.1	24.9
	$F^{/a}$ = 11.522**			
Father's Education				
Mean	13.3	14.0	13.3	13.6
S.D.	2.86	2.97	2.71	2.88
F	= 7.121**			
Mother's Education				
Mean	12.8	13.1	12.9	12.9
S.D.	1.96	2.12	2.15	2.07
F	= 3.537			

/a F-test of differences between community types

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table 2. Self-reported GPA by Community Types and Socio-demographic Characteristics

	Unadjusted				Adjusted[/a]			
	Slow Growth Comm.	Mod. Growth Comm.	Rap. Growth Comm.	Total	Slow Growth Comm.	Mod. Growth Comm.	Rap. Growth Comm.	Total
Residence Status								
Newcomers	3.23	3.24	3.17	3.21	3.22	3.23	3.16	3.20
Old-timers	3.23	3.29	3.28	3.27	3.23	3.29	3.28	3.26
F	.004	.873	5.168*	3.651	.063	1.442	5.710*	4.539*
Sex								
Male	3.13	3.16	3.14	3.14	3.12	3.15	3.13	3.13
Female	3.36	3.40	3.34	3.37	3.35	3.40	3.33	3.37
F	39.9**	39.0**	19.7**	99.0**	40.6**	42.1**	19.1**	104.3**
Religion								
Mormon	3.24	3.31	3.24	3.27	3.24	3.31	3.23	3.26
Non-Mormon	3.18	3.08	3.27	3.17	3.19	3.08	3.28	3.17
F	1.219	13.62**	.273	7.31**	.871	13.42**	.372	6.36*
Total	3.23	3.28	3.24	3.25	3.23	3.27	3.24	3.25
F[/b]				1.786				.943

/a Adjusted for father's occupational status and educational attainment, and mother's educational attainment.
/b F-test for differences by community types only.

* p <.05
** p <.01

Table 3. Participation by Community Types and Socio-demographic Characteristics

	Unadjusted				Adjusted[/a]			
	Slow Growth Comm.	Mod. Growth Comm.	Rap. Growth Comm.	Total	Slow Growth Comm.	Mod. Growth Comm.	Rap. Growth Comm.	Total
Residence Status								
Newcomers	2.99	2.56	2.11	2.54	2.96	2.53	2.10	2.53
Oldtimers	3.16	2.92	2.72	2.97	3.17	2.93	2.72	2.98
F	.659	3.63	9.94**	14.21**	.984	4.14*	10.32**	15.76**
Sex								
Male	2.91	2.77	2.48	2.76	2.90	2.75	2.48	2.76
Female	3.38	2.93	2.58	2.99	3.39	2.94	2.57	3.00
F	8.66**	1.11	.324	6.02*	9.41**	1.51	.221	6.91**
Religion								
Mormon	3.35	3.01	2.67	3.05	3.34	3.00	2.66	3.05
Non-Mormon	1.79	1.60	1.65	1.69	1.84	1.61	1.65	1.72
F	49.3**	35.2**	15.5**	96.2**	46.8**	34.6**	15.2**	93.5**
Total	3.13	2.85	2.53	2.88	3.15	2.83	2.55	2.88
F[/b]				12.11**				12.89**

/a Adjusted for father's occupational status and educational attainment, and mother's educational attainment.
/b F-test for differences by community types only.

* p <.05
** p <.01